



Minus 148 Degrees

Art Davidson

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Classic tale of dramatic near-death experiences in the harshest of conditions.

Minus 148 Degrees Details

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Author : Art Davidson

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From Reader Review Minus 148 Degrees for online ebook

Nancynova says

A re-publication; an expedition sets out to climb Mt Mckinley (Denali) in Alaska in the winter. Only three of them "summit", then are caught in a storm, the waiting party of four separates after they think the other three surely are dead. In the end all are rescued, although the party lost one man in a crevasse early in the climb. This version contains information on what each of the party is doing now, and other winter climbs that have been attempted on the mountain

Dru says

I've done winter camping. I've gone climbing. I've gone hiking. But never have I even CONSIDERED wanting to climb a mountain in the wintertime, especially not one with McKinley's reputation! With all of that in mind, I was intensely intrigued by the cover. The title alone was enough to make me pull it off my brother's bookshelf. A winter ascent of McKinley? I've got to read this.

Sure enough, I plowed through it in a day! In a blizzard, no less. But of course, I was snuggled up in a warm house, in fleece pajamas and a cup of hot chocolate ready to sate my thirst.

Those men who both attempted and succeeded (not all of them did) are certifiably insane! You can't help but admire them for finding both the dedication and willpower to do this, but... if I was married to one of them, I would probably threaten to divorce them if they wanted to do this. How those men (sans one) even survived this, after reading about their experiences, I still do not know. I marvel in their ability to dodge death.

For anybody who enjoys the outdoors, this is a great read! Of course, I wouldn't want to read it while camping outside during a blizzard or in similar conditions. Just something to keep in mind.

Eric_W says

It's bad enough to want to get really cold in the summer, but to do it in the winter buggers rational thought. These idiots decided to climb Mt. McKinley in the dead of winter.

Art Davidson was disappointed as a child when he learned that all the continents had been discovered. It's no wonder then that he just had to climb McKinley in winter. Many thought it was impossible. Temperatures hovered around -60 and winds often reached 160 mph. Indeed, in December there is only about 4 hours of sunlight; in February around 7 hours.

They had trouble getting a team together, and the climb began badly when one of the members fell to his death in a crevasse. And this was in the first couple of days on the glacier. He was not roped to anyone else, a basic failure in elementary safety rules when walking on glacier ice.

Three of them finally made it to the summit, only to be caught in a blinding wind blizzard on the way back

down. Huddled in a snow cave, sharing body heat for barely minimum warmth against rock and snow. Ugh. The only thing that saved them was the discovery of food left in a cache from three years before and some gas one of the climbers remembered he had left behind from a previous climb.

Read this during the summer when it's really hot. I couldn't help but think they might have done better had they prepared more thoroughly. Hard to determine the cause of some of the whining: altitude sickness or personality. Still, a ripping good read.

lynn says

Tales of extreme adventure never lose their appeal for me! I am especially drawn to stories of epic mountain ascents under horrible conditions, possibly because they are often steeped in descriptions of how each of the excursion team's personalities act, think, and react to each other and the situations in which they find themselves. This story is of the first winter ascent of Denali/Mt. McKinley in Alaska. As often is the case when climbing over glaciers, ice and snow to altitudes most of us would not even think of escaping to, this team encounters every dilemma possible, from hidden crevasses, icy, steep grades, deep snow, boulder fields and most of all extreme low temperatures, at one point a wind chill of -148 degrees! One team member narrates the story while inserting excerpts from the journals of several of his team mates to give a better idea of the "whole picture". This edition was a re-release twenty years later, which also affords a glimpse into what affect this one adventure had on their outlook on life as they continued on. A fascinating read!

David Readmont-Walker says

Well written mountaineering-survival Robin. Real page turner. Would recommend.

Sarah Taylor says

Wow! This is the best non-fiction adventure book I have yet to read...I found myself anxious to get home from work in order to read more about this incredibly dangerous and heroic tale to climb Mt. McKinley in the dead of winter.

Christy Keeler says

Just... WOW! I cannot imagine what would motivate an individual to do what these men did—attempted and in a few cases successfully climbed Mt. McKinley in the winter. The cold even when in the "warmth" of their igloo was below freezing. What a miserable experience!

The worst of their climb, though, came at two points—a crevasse and the summit. They lost one man within a few days of beginning; yet, continued their journey. Then, unbelievably, three survived after being trapped in a cramped cave at the summit for over a week while low temperatures and wind wreaked havoc on the mountain.

Davidson tells the story with gripping detail, adventure, and emotion. He presents a raw and biting tale of the realities and unpredictability of winter ascents. In addition, he includes diary entries from his compatriots who also wrote in raw form. In some cases, these accounts do not show Davidson in his best form. I have great appreciation for a man who is willing to expose his weaknesses in addition to his strengths.

If anything, this book cautions toward those attempting to "do this at home." To hike high in winter conditions means putting yourself in fatal jeopardy.

Mihai says

A riveting mountaineering epic that doubles as one of the most incredible survival stories of all times, *Minus 148* has remained a classic since its original publication, so the only question I have is: how come I didn't read this earlier? As a climber, I am familiar with the challenges when we set our sights on various summits, but even fifty years later the proposition of taking on Denali, one of the coldest mountains on the planet, in winter remains close to the realm of lunacy. The fact that Davidson's 1967 expedition managed to get three people to the top, and survived conditions thought to be impossible for the human body, is a testament to their perseverance and determination. Of course, it is understood that the climb was a success because the weather held out for the most part, however the desperate struggle in the ice cave at Denali Pass, as well as the tragedy, mistakes and disagreements lower on the mountain all combine to create one of the most memorable stories in the history of adventure seeking. The reason why *Minus 148* continues to enthrall generations of readers, the majority of whom are not climbers, is because of its deeply human element. In the land of bare rock, cold snow and ferocious wind, the only way to survive is to be honest with yourself and your teammates. This is what Davidson succeeded in capturing when he wrote the book, and it is why we keep returning to it. The story only makes sense when we can relate to those who happened to be there - from their character flaws to their fears, desires or sacrifices, all emotions are laid raw for us to take in, then ponder on the resiliency of the human spirit. The writing is so compelling that the book is hard to put down; remember to breathe.

John says

As a guide I have participated in 21 Denali Expeditions and for some reason had never read this book. I found it at a library sale for a buck and started it on vacation. It was fantastic. Climbing Denali via the West Buttress has become a much more routine activity than it was in 1969 and it is interesting to read about something as wild as a winter ascent taking place relatively early in the popularity of the climb. These guys were true hard men. Looking back from the vantage of the future I found myself thinking, "what the hell?" as they employed various questionable tactics during the climb such as walking unroped, in winter on the lower Kahiltna Glacier, but was also fascinated to hear that even in 1969 fixed lines remained overwinter on the more technical sections of the West Buttress route. It also offers an early glimpse at Ray Genet, who would become synonymous with Denali guiding, before he found his way to the profession. Bearing in mind that those of us that climb today start with the acquired wisdom of the tens of thousands of previous climbers, I was amazed at how much pure suffering these guys could take. It also offers a good glimpse into the reality that a moderately skilled group of climbers that can keep it together and work as a team can do something fairly impressive. These guys loved being in the mountains and described it in much more basic terms than most of the modern climbing reading I come across. If the whole world set out in groups of 8 to climb Denali in winter today, it would be a bit of a disaster for this popular climbing route, but I am so glad they had this

adventure "back in the day." Very worthwhile read and interesting history for those interested in North America's highest mountain.

Julie says

I loved that this book had a "where are they now" section for the anniversary edition. Davidson was smart to include multiple points of view for the telling of this incredible escapade.

Thomas Jr. says

One of the most gripping and frightening accounts of survival in the face of appalling weather that I have ever read, and I was long a devotee of mountaineering literature. How often the image comes back to me of Art Davidson benighted on a gale-pummeled ridge of McKinley/Denali with only his sleeping bag for shelter--and then discovering that ALL of the insulating down had been driven to the downwind side by the howling winds. Few humans come through this kind of real-life nightmare alive, and Art Davidson is one of them. A thrilling, sobering read.

Karen A. says

First published in 1969 and included on National Geographic's top 100 Greatest Adventure Books of all time, *Minus 148 Degrees*, by Art Davidson retells the compelling high stakes story of a group of men who made the first winter ascent on Mt. McKinley. Art and his friend, Dave Johnston, both accomplished climbers are looking for adventure and come up with an idea to lead the first team to summit Mt. McKinley in the winter. Most climbing peers of the time think they are crazy, rightfully so, even in the summer months, Denali (as it is known to locals) can be challenging and even deadly. Both men persevere with their vision, and eventually come up with a team.

Their story is compelling as it is filled with mistakes that in hind sight should have been obvious. The author does a good job of building suspense, and even though the reader knows the climbers survive (except for one), they do not know how or what trials face these men. The author received permission from his fellow climbers to publish their diary entries which gives the story a well rounded all points of view perspective. Once they are down, one still marvels at what drove them to attempt the climb in the first place, the reader may be caught between thinking them foolish but admiring their tenacity and sheer guts.

Ashley says

I am not a climber, nor a mountaineer, and I have absolutely no desire to take up either sport, yet I couldn't put this book down. Art Davidson does a phenomenal job of taking a reader to Denali in the middle of the winter while a group of young climbers attempt to summit. I thought Art did a fantastic job of bringing the reader to the mountain and giving us a glimpse into what it means to find yourself trapped 17,000 ft high, with no means of rescue. You can't help but fall in love with these young climbers and although you know at least Art will make it out alive (I mean, he lived to write the book, right?) I still felt myself holding my

breath as I read. How would they get off the mountain? When will they find food? Will they all make it?

This book is clearly an amazing read for climbers and mountaineers, but it's also a fascinating read for anyone who enjoys adventure, drama, the outdoors, or anyone who wonders what it's like to be the sort of person who puts everything aside to stand on the top of a tall mountain. Great read.

Linda says

Terrific read!

Paul Kinzer says

This was a riveting account of the winter ascent of Denali, and especially enjoyable after having just visited, albeit on a warm sunny day from the park road. :) Many of the decisions, though, seemed questionable in light of their experience - even during the planning stages, and before they reached high altitudes. The author deserves credit for the unvarnished truth of the expedition.
